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UNREQUESTED REPORT REGARDING RECENT ORE 49-50 DEBACLE

10/2/50

1. I had a conference with FE/P on 28 September at which I was told that the

draft of 49-50 ~~presented~~ ^{approved} by the Staff was from their point of view unacceptable in toto.

Through discussion ^{later} I found that the principal reason ~~was~~ in the fact that they had

an altogether different concept of what the paper was to be about than the one the

Staff had been working on. (To see what they thought the paper ought to be, look

at the draft estimate they presented originally.)

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DATE 4 JAN 91 HRP 89-2**

2. From their conversation, I should judge that the misconception was mainly a con-

sequence of the meetings held last summer between FE/P and representatives of D/Pub

and SS as a result of which they were supposed to take the list of questions sub-

mitted and answer those that they could. Apparently, they got the notion that

the purpose of these discussions was to provide the exact terms of reference for a

paper to be written by them on the subject of Russian-Chinese relations. They seem

to have selected the questions from the list that they considered important and used

them as a sort of outline for their paper. Thus, for example, when they read the

SS draft and found no discussion of the Tito analogy, they were dumbfounded because

they had believed that the question regarding Titoism in China (which was one of

those in the original list) must be an essential part of the discussion for the reason

that they had selected it and used it as part of their ~~at~~ outline.

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3. I cannot offer a solution for the various problems this case seems to me to arouse, but I am definitely beginning to suspect that it is a mistake to initiate projects on too definite a basis. I know there are those who disagree and believe that the remedy for the situation lies in an extremely careful preliminary consideration of the problem and a statement of it in the most definite terms possible. They may

be right, and if I were looking at this from a purely theoretical angle, I should be inclined to think so too.

It seems to me, though, that our actual experience has tended to indicate the opposite. I think there are probably about three reasons for this: (1) in the case of many estimates---even those where the general idea is quite clear and many of those that are requested---you don't really know what you're after until you've gone pretty far into the matter---often, until you've actually attempted a draft; (2) the existence of a flat, inelastic order for a product tends to inhibit the thinking of those working on it, often making them oblivious to some of the most vital issues involved because they are thinking only in terms of some sort of outline or set of directions; (3) just as sure as you specify exactly what you think you want and there is a disagreement about the end product, the people who furnish the product are going to complain with

heat and bitterness that you have gone back on your promise, changed orders in the middle of the stream and so on, and that the result is confusion, inefficiency, bad faith, poor morale, and general reprehensibility.

4. I'm inclined to think rather that (1) ^{as many} ~~most~~ Staff projects as possible should be initiated on a purely question-and-answer basis, it being made plain to those answering the questions that the exact approach to the project involved will be decided upon by the SS after the answers are in; (2) where a project is to be written by a Division at the request of the Staff, we should again depend as much as possible on presenting questions to be answered and problems to be solved, not committing ourselves any more than we must to any specific formula for the solution. I know that when you do that, someone always begins wailing to the effect that you

haven't said what you wanted and how can ~~they~~ be expected to proceed until

he knows. Such complaints can always be handled in conferences, however, and the conferences are usually more fruitful if the initiative comes from those who have complained than if you go down to them in the first place and try to tell what you want.